

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-21 and 23-41 are presented for consideration, with Claims 1, 21 and 41 being independent.

The following remarks addressed the Office Action mailed September 30, 2003.

In that regard, Claims 1, 3-5, 8-13, 16, 21, 23-25 and 28-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig '294. In addition, Claims 6, 7, 18-20, 26, 27 and 38-40 stand rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig in view of Brunson '823, and Claims 14, 15, 17, 34, 35 and 37 are rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig in combination with Palmer '683. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As set forth in Claim 1, Applicants' invention relates to a distributed office system provided with terminal devices installed for a plurality of users, and a server device connected to the terminal devices via a communication channel, for displaying information on a screen of a terminal device of each of the users. As amended, the server includes receiving means for receiving information on whether a user is presently working or on leave from the terminal device, and transmitting means for transmitting the information to each of the terminal devices. Each of the terminal devices includes receiving means for receiving the information on whether a user is presently working or on leave, display means, and changing means for changing display of a user's virtual single room office into display of a user's virtual single room office in a desired department in response to selecting the desired department indicated in an organization chart. The display means displays i) a virtual office area where a user's virtual single room office in a department is displayed, with each user's virtual single office having a picked-up image which is updated repeatedly and having information on the user's working place or leave

transmitted from the server device and the user's name, ii) a class organization button allowing the display means to display an organization chart, iii) information on whether a virtual meeting room is occupied or vacant, and iv) a dialog box for communicating with a selected user one to one in response to designating a user's virtual single room office of the selected user.

Claim 21 relates to a method of managing terminal devices provided for a plurality of user's in a distributed office system and corresponds substantially to Claim 1. The method therefore includes the steps of receiving information on whether a user is presently working or on leave from the terminal device, and displaying virtual offices, a class organization button, information on whether a virtual meeting room is occupied or vacant, and a dialog box for communicating with a selected user. In addition, a display of a user's virtual single room office can be changed into a display of a user's virtual single room office in a desired department in response to selecting the desired department indicated in the organization chart.

In accordance with Applicants' claimed invention, a distributed office system can display relevant, updated information about each user. Support for the amendments to the claims can be found, for example, in Figure 7 and the accompanying specification on page 21, line 3 et seq.

The primary citation to Ludwig relates to a multimedia collaboration system displaying an information aggregate of another user's working situation. The Ludwig patent was discussed in detail in the previous Amendment of September 15, 2003, and those comments are incorporated herein by reference.

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, however, it is respectfully submitted that Ludwig fails to teach or suggest, among other features, displaying a virtual office, a class organization button, and a dialog box as set forth in the claims, as well as provide the ability to change display of a user's virtual single room office into display of a user's virtual single room office in a desired department in response to selecting the desired department.

The secondary citations to Brunson and Palmer fail to compensate for the deficiencies in Ludwig. Brunson relates to a video messaging system and was cited for its teaching of a universal mailbox to store messages. In Palmer, a video teleconferencing method and apparatus is provided and is relied upon for its teaching of frame rate control.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Ludwig, whether taken alone or in combination with either Brunson and/or Palmer, fails to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103 are deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

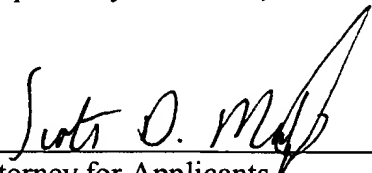
Accordingly, it is submitted that Applicants' invention as set forth in independent Claims 1 and 21 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, dependent Claims 3-20 and 23-40 set forth additional features of Applicants' invention. Independent consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully submitted.

Newly submitted independent Claims 41 is also submitted to be patentable over the cited art. Claim 41 relates to terminal devices installed for a plurality of users. The terminal devices include the features of the terminal devices as set forth in Claim 1.

Due consideration and prompt passage to issue are respectfully requested..

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C.
office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our
below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney for Applicants
Scott D. Malpede
Registration No. 32,533

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3801
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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